United Nations A/50/PV.86

General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Friday, 8 December 1995, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 161 *(continued)*

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/670)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at the 83rd meeting, yesterday morning, I call on the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): Within the framework of the various recent international conferences, the World Summit for Social Development holds a special place. At Copenhagen, for the first time, the community of nations attempted to examine in an integrated manner those factors which influence, in a positive and in a negative way, human and social development. Heads of State and Government committed themselves to building a culture of cooperation and partnership to meet the needs of all, especially those most affected by human distress.

The Summit marked an important moment in our understanding of the word "development". That word can never again, after the Copenhagen Summit, be separated from its essential human and social dimension. The centrality of the human person in the development process, a principle already recognized in the Rio Declaration, has been more firmly anchored as essential to any true notion of development. When the Copenhagen Summit speaks of

> "people-centred sustainable development" *(A/CONF.166/9, para. 4, annex I)*,

it clearly wishes this centrality of the human person to be the key to the interpretation of that phrase. We can truly speak of development only when the needs and the security of all persons and communities are respected and guaranteed. We can speak of true development only when the rights of all are respected and when all persons and communities have access to what they need to exercise their rights effectively. The manner in which Governments approach the follow-up to the Summit will be a sign of the seriousness with which they wish to respond to the commitments solemnly made at Copenhagen by their Heads of State and Government.

The Summit emphasized the primary responsibility of national Governments for social development, while at the same time recognizing that social development

> "cannot be successfully achieved without the collective commitment and efforts of the international community". *(A/CONF.166/9, para. 26 (c))*

Precisely on the level of the international community, the World Summit for Social Development, unlike the other recent international conferences, does not have one clear focal point within the United Nations system to coordinate its follow-up. The Summit touched on areas which are within the competence of various bodies and specialized agencies. It is important, however, that the

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follow-up process not lose anything of the integrated approach to the questions that characterized the Summit's own originality. The Commission for Social Development might assume within the United Nations system a particular role in the follow-up and development of this integrated approach. It is to be hoped that the Commission for Social Development can be strengthened and rendered more effective in order to become a focal point, as the witness of the United Nations system's commitment to social development as a priority of its activity.

The Summit also recognized the special contribution which non-governmental organizations and civil society are called upon to make in social development. All actors in the area of social development are called upon to foster a renewed sense of solidarity in today's world, both within individual countries and at the international level.

The human person can reach full development only in a spirit of community and solidarity with others. No individual, no community, no economic unit can live in isolation from others. The recognition of the interdependence of all nations only strengthens the aspiration to greater solidarity. A process of globalization, without the safeguard of a determined ethic of solidarity, can only result in rendering existing imbalances more acute. Development and peace depend on the ability of persons and peoples to establish bonds of solidarity. Pope John Paul, in his speech to the General Assembly on 5 October 1995, expressed this desire for greater solidarity, asking that the international community be seen as a

> "family of nations" (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 20th Meeting, p. 23*).

The Pope noted that

> "The idea of a 'family' immediately evokes something more than simple functional relations or a mere convergence of interests. The family is by nature a community based on mutual trust, mutual support and sincere respect. In an authentic family the strong do not dominate; instead, the weaker members, because of their very weakness, are all the more welcomed and served". (*ibid.*)

The same spirit of solidarity must mark relationships within each nation. Speaking about the theme of poverty, in the context of the Social Summit, Pope John Paul posed this question concerning the alternatives with which each society is faced today:

> "Do we want a civilization of love which involves all humanity, or a civilization of individual withdrawal, where love is absent and which leads inexorably to a world which does not know where it is going?" (*Address to the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", 27 October 1995, n.2*)

Even since the commitments made at Copenhagen, however, we can see further signs emerging, in various parts of the world, of a kind of individual and collective withdrawal from a true spirit of solidarity. Such a withdrawal into individual and collective isolationism is not worthy of a world which possesses unprecedented possibilities for resolving the most urgent problems of social development. We must see that the noble commitments of the World Summit are not allowed to evaporate, even in the face of the financial difficulties which almost all nations are currently facing.

The spirit of solidarity must be a mark of economic systems. The Copenhagen Summit stressed clearly the importance of

> "dynamic, open, free markets". (*A/CONF.166/9, Commitment 1(e)*)

It also recalled, however, the need for appropriate intervention to prevent or counteract market failure, promote stability and long-term investment, ensure fair competition and ethical conduct, and harmonize economic and social development. In the same context, it stressed the need for programmes

> "that would entitle and enable people living in poverty and the disadvantaged, especially women, to participate fully and productively in the economy and society". (*ibid.*)

Whereas the Summit's final documents do not set out to present a comprehensive and complete vision of the role of the economy at the service of the human community, there are many references which call for innovative approaches in this area. It is to be hoped that in the future some of these areas will be the subject of greater investigation and research. Providing access for all to opportunities for economic security and development is a major challenge for the future. An economic system which leaves large sectors of the population on its margins, without access to its benefits and opportunities, especially employment, is not a just one, and indeed makes bad economic sense. An economic

system must foster the widest participation and contribution of all. Pope John Paul adds:

> "Poverty cannot be definitively eradicated unless the poor themselves take their own destiny in hand and are involved in the conception and implementation of programmes directly concerning them. Only in this way will they rediscover their dignity". (*Address to the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", 27 October 1995, n.2*)

The delegation of the Holy See wishes to draw special attention to the commitments and promises made at Copenhagen concerning the question of external debt, especially that of the poorest countries. There is a need for greater cooperation between nations and international organizations to monitor and alleviate the effects of debt burdens, especially on the ability of countries to allocate the necessary funds to social needs. The Commitment to develop techniques of debt conversion applied to social development programmes and the Commitment concerning the immediate implementation of certain measures favourable to the poorest countries must not remain dead letters.

At Copenhagen, the Heads of States recognized that

> "Our societies must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live throughout our diverse countries and regions". (*A/CONF.166/9, p. 5, para. 3*)

Again, it is stressed that the vision of social development endorsed by the Summit and its participants was a

> "political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision". (*ibid., p. 9, para. 25*)

Indeed, one of the preparatory Seminars for the Summit was precisely on the subject of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of social progress. There can be no vision of social progress or social development that does not finally come to examine in depth the need for a renewal of the human spirit and that marvels at the innate goodness and inherent dignity of humankind while at the same time stopping short in the face of the evil that human beings are capable of inflicting on their brothers and sisters.

Governments are aware of the limits of their mandate and sphere of competence in this area, but experience shows how necessary it is to face today's challenges in the field of social development in a spirit of compassion, responsibility and courage. We know that many of the great social wounds that mark our era, especially as the result of war and conflicts, can be healed only in the context of forgiveness, reconciliation and full respect for the rights of individuals and communities.

These are ethical and spiritual values that we all recognize as essential for social development. Our programme for the future requires us to look more closely at them and at the type of society we wish to create and transmit to the coming generations. Governments must help all those who wish to make their contribution to such a process of reflection and action. They must ensure that a climate for dialogue and the building of community can be constructed at all levels of society. The richness of the diversity of cultural traditions must be welcomed and embraced. The inspiration that so many persons derive from their religious beliefs must be allowed to flourish for the good of society. The cultures and religious sentiments of all, and in particular of indigenous peoples, must be fully respected by Governments and international organizations. The family must be supported so that it can more effectively play its irreplaceable role in a changing world.

These are all aspects that belong to the heritage of humankind. Their protection is demanded as a fundamental right. The legitimate respect for pluralism in our societies should not result in a weakening of our commitment to those common values without which society will only lose its sense of cohesion and direction.

The Holy See wishes to offer its full cooperation in the process of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has been assigned special responsibility within the Holy See to follow this task, and it will intensify its efforts to contribute through study, reflection and the coordination of various Catholic institutions around all the principal themes of the Summit, in a spirit of cooperation.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that action on any draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 161 will be taken at a later date, to be announced.

Agenda item 165

Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/744)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.46)

The President: I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.46.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.46, entitled "Fourth World Conference on Women", under agenda item 165. I have been authorized by the drafters and negotiators of this text to present this draft resolution on their behalf.

In addition to the sponsors listed in document A/50/L.46, the following countries are cosponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovenia, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela and Zambia.

It is a very short but important draft resolution. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing, was a leap forward towards the empowerment of women. The participation of thousands of Government representatives, members of non-governmental organizations, women's groups, experts and academics made it possible for us to give a fitting conclusion to our preparatory process and to make sound decisions.

Impressive conference documents, however, cannot guarantee automatic implementation. At Beijing we decided that our next step would be the General Assembly — the highest intergovernmental body in the United Nations — which would be responsible for policy making and appraisal of the follow-up of the World Conference on Women. Today, we are here to endorse our commitments made at Beijing.

The draft resolution before us is the outcome of open-ended consultations attended by the Group of 77, the European Union, the United States, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Romania and other States from Central Europe, the Baltic States and many other States. The draft before the Assembly is an agreed text.

The draft resolution has one preambular paragraph. It notes the successful conclusion of the Fourth World Conference, which culminated in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. In the four operative paragraphs the Assembly expresses profound gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for acting as host to the Conference, takes note of the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, endorses the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as adopted on 15 September 1995, and calls upon all States and all bodies of the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, to take action for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

After the adoption of the draft resolution we can take further necessary steps for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

On this occasion, on behalf of the co-sponsors, I should like to thank the Government and the people of China for acting as host to the Conference. Our thanks go also to the United Nations Secretariat for successfully steering the preparatory process and for bringing the Conference to a successful conclusion.

I should like to thank all the negotiators who participated in the drafting of the present text. Although the draft resolution is very short, the negotiations on it were both lengthy and intensive. I appreciate the sense of accommodation shown by all negotiators.

I should also like to thank the Chairman of the Third Committee for his overall guidance and counsel during our consultations, as well as Ms. Kate Star Newell, Secretary of the Third Committee, for facilitating the process. Our special thanks go to Mr. John Mathiason. Without him, we could not have

accomplished our task so efficiently. We also thank Ms. Christine Brautigam for her valuable support and assistance.

Finally, I should like to express the hope, on behalf of the co-sponsors, that draft resolution A/50/L.46 will be adopted by consensus.

Mrs. Samonte-Limjuco (Philippines): I have the honour and pleasure to speak today on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The international women's movement has come a long way. The road to equality and freedom led us to Mexico in 1975, where we adopted a Plan of Action that led to the proclamation of the United Nations International Decade for Women and, a few years later, to the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The road led us to Copenhagen in 1980, where we adopted a Programme of Action that emphasized education, employment and health. In 1985, the road brought us to Nairobi, where we crafted the Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, based on the three core issues of equality, development and peace. The Strategies aimed at promoting the empowerment of women and their enjoyment of human rights at the national, regional and international levels.

The Strategies succeeded in sensitizing the world to gender issues, but by mid-decade it became increasingly apparent that not much progress was being made. The movement appeared to be losing steam. But finally the road brought us east to Beijing, where we saw the largest-ever gathering of women and men with the sole purpose of re-energizing the women's movement to equality, to peace and to development.

Beijing was the culmination of a long and arduous fight to give women their rightful place in the sun. At Beijing, we declared that we shall no longer be second-class citizens. At Beijing, we laid claim to the twenty-first century as the Century of Women. And at Beijing, we cried to the women of the world: Behold, our time has come!

Based on 12 critical areas of concern, momentous decisions were made at Beijing that are certain to change the future for the women of the world — and, of course, for their men. The Beijing Declaration is a clear statement of our determination to bring about these changes and a reaffirmation of the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere, in the interest of all humanity. While recognizing the advances made in the status of women, it decries the persistent inequalities between women and men and the increasing feminization of poverty as major reasons for the uneven progress made.

The Platform for Action prescribes action that must be taken by Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and civil society for the empowerment of women. Through these actions it aims to accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the removal of all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. It enshrines the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the work place and in the wider national, regional and international communities.

I wish to note in this connection the contribution of the regional preparatory meetings, the intergovernmental organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to the enrichment of the Platform of Action.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as of my own country, the Philippines, I have the honour to endorse, in the most favorable terms and with the fullest optimism born of conviction and the highest expectations, the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

We call on the international community to cooperate fully in the effective and full implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action. We call on the various United Nations bodies and forums to do their utmost to bring about the early realization of the agreements adopted in Beijing. We call on the members of civil society, non-governmental organizations and all relevant actors in society to cooperate with Governments in fulfilling the aspirations so eloquently expressed in Beijing. And lastly, but certainly of the utmost, critical importance to the success of these endeavours, we call not only for adequate resources but for new and additional resources to facilitate the implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and of my country, the Philippines, it is my great pleasure and honour to convey to the Government of China and to the Chinese people our warmest thanks and sincere appreciation for having hosted the Fourth World Conference on Women, for the excellent amenities that were so thoughtfully and graciously made available, and, most important, for the warmth of the hospitality accorded to the participants and observers in the Conference.

The President: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed this afternoon at 4 p.m. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to place their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At this plenary meeting devoted to receiving and endorsing the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, and of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, which have associated themselves with this statement.

The Fourth World Conference on Women ended last September with the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Platform for Action and the results of the regional preparatory meetings together constitute not only a landmark on the way to ensuring equality between women and men, boys and girls, in all our societies, but also a political commitment for action to be taken in order to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace by the year 2000.

The European Union welcomes, wholeheartedly and with satisfaction, the success of the Beijing Conference. We would like to express our gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for having made it possible for the Conference to be held in Beijing.

We were most encouraged by the solidarity achieved among women from different regions of the world during the preparatory process and at the Conference itself.

The previous major United Nations conferences and summits had already, from different perspectives, given specific attention to such themes as the enjoyment by women of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and women's contributions to development. The Beijing Conference built on the results of previous United Nations conferences and provided a global, comprehensive approach to the advancement of women, identifying critical areas for immediate action and formulating the necessary action to be taken. We strongly commit ourselves to the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Conference and to its full and effective implementation.

The Platform for Action is an agenda for the empowerment of women. We reaffirm that women all over the world must be able to participate fully on an equal basis with men in the economic, political, social and cultural decision-making process in all fields of society, for their own benefit and for the benefit of society as a whole. In this respect, participation in the political and economic fields is particularly important. Furthermore, both women and men need to shoulder their responsibilities and participate fully in all actions towards achieving equality.

We fully recognize and commend the key role played by non-governmental organizations, women's organizations, feminist movements and individual women and men in the preparatory process and the Conference itself, as well as in the NGO Forum held in Huairou. We encourage them to participate actively in the implementation and follow-up of the Declaration and Platform for Action.

The real challenge begins now. The responsibility for implementation and follow-up lies primarily with Governments. We have to mobilize the political will and the resources necessary to that end. We call upon all actors at all levels — national, regional and international — to support and contribute to this common effort. Improving the situation of women in all countries in accordance with the Platform for Action, will not be solely in their interest but in that of humanity as a whole.

The European Union strongly supported the preparatory process and the Beijing Conference itself. We are now actively pursuing full implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action. This week, the European Union adopted its fourth Action Programme for equality of opportunity. We will build on the momentum reached at Beijing to adopt now, at the national level, the necessary measures for making the goals of the Conference a reality as soon as possible.

Ms. Moutoussamy-Ashe (United States of America): I am pleased to present the views of the United States concerning efforts to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women. My Government was well pleased with the adoption by that Conference of a forward-looking Platform for Action. That Platform will serve as a blueprint for efforts to enable women to participate fully as citizens in societies around the globe. The focus now shifts to the implementation of the Platform and to removing obstacles to its fulfillment that exist in each country.

My Government was gratified that, despite the unprecedented diversity of those represented at the Conference, an unprecedented degree of common ground was created. Consensus in Beijing revolved around these basic principles: violence against women must stop; girls must be valued equally with boys; women must have equal access to education, health care and the levers of economic and political power; family responsibilities should be shared; and the human rights of women are an integral component of all human rights — they are neither separable nor different from those of men.

A half century ago, a great First Lady of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt, was the driving force behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year Americans were proud that another courageous First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, eloquently reaffirmed America's commitment to that Declaration and its application to all people.

The Universal Declaration is not a document of East, West, North or South. It finds its spiritual and moral roots in all cultures. At its heart is a fundamental distinction between coercion and freedom. In applying it today, we must affirm that no mother should feel compelled to abandon her daughter because of a societal preference for males. No woman or girl should be forced to undergo genital mutilation, or to have an abortion, or to engage in prostitution, or to enter into marriage or to have sex. No woman should be forced to remain silent for fear of political persecution, detention, abuse or torture. Every woman should be free to make her own decisions about health, including her own fertility. And all women should have the right to help shape the destiny of their communities and countries. These are simple principles, but if they were observed around the world, they would have astonishing results.

Despite recent gains, women remain an undervalued and underdeveloped human resource. This is not to say that women have trouble finding work. In many societies, in addition to bearing the children, they do most of the non-child-related work. But often they are barred from owning land, are excluded from schools, are denied financial credit, are provided less nourishment and are permitted little or no voice in Government.

It is no accident that most of those in the world who are abjectly poor are women. Frequently, they are left to care for children without the help of the children's father. Many are trapped at a young age in a web of ignorance, powerlessness and abuse. Consider that more than half the murders of women in many countries, including the United States, are committed by present or former spouses or partners. We have reports that, in some places child prostitution is growing because clients believe older prostitutes are more likely to be infected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). In many rural societies, women perform much of the farming and all of the child-rearing, but are denied a role in financial decisions. And, almost everywhere, women are hurt by discrimination and by social and economic structures that are unjust.

The Women's Conference could not solve these problems overnight, but it could — and did — outline a plan for addressing them. This matters not only to women, but to everyone. Releasing the productive capacity of women is one key to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving standards of life everywhere. When women are empowered, families are strengthened, socially constructive values are taught, sexually transmitted disease is slowed and truly sustainable development becomes possible.

If measured by the core principles affirmed in Beijing, the Fourth World Conference was a major step forward. But the true measure of its accomplishments will be found not in what happened there, but in what happens now — in the actions taken to fulfil the commitments made there. Here, Governments will have the principal responsibility. But the United Nations can perform three vital functions: first, it can serve as an example by according women fair and equal treatment within the Organization and in programmes administered by it; secondly, it can coordinate actions to advance the status of women by inventorying and prioritizing recommendations made not only at Beijing but also in related conferences and conventions preceding Beijing; and, thirdly, it can monitor and report on implementation of the Platform for Action around the world.

In this context, my Government is pleased by the Secretary-General's commitment to ensuring strong coordination of these and other activities as a follow-up to the Conference.

My Government is also pleased to provide this assurance: the United States is determined to meet the commitments outlined in Beijing by Ambassador Albright to implement the Platform for Action. Our efforts will focus, in particular, on combating the very serious problem of domestic violence; improving women's health; increasing awareness about AIDS; developing work environments that are family-friendly; and encouraging access by women entrepreneurs to credit. These and other activities will be coordinated by a new Inter-Agency Council on Women, appointed by President Clinton for precisely this purpose.

In recent decades, in the United States and around the world, opportunities for women have expanded. It is no longer a question of whether women from all countries will have a strong voice in controlling their destinies, but only when and how that goal will be achieved. But building inclusive societies is still a work in progress. The United States has been working on it for two centuries. For more than half our nation's history, until 75 years ago this past August, American women could not even vote. Many traditional or authoritarian societies still have a very long way to go. The Fourth Women's Conference offers a roadmap every country can use to move forward, whatever current practices and policies may be.

The Platform also provides non-governmental organizations and other grassroots organizations with an internationally approved statement of principles and goals to be used as leverage in pursuit of further positive change. In doing so, it will lend momentum to actions undertaken in classrooms, living rooms, courtrooms and boardrooms around the world — actions to translate promise into reality and to make the idea of equality come true in people's lives.

The Fourth World Conference on Women is part of a centuries-long process of adjustment to a changing technological, social and cultural environment. It is part also of a historic struggle to build societies based on law, decency and respect for the dignity of every human being.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said that if we are determined to make progress, we should

> "grasp anything that is a step forward...[for the] big changes in human history [are] arrived at slowly."

To my Government, the Women's Conference will be a success if it brings us even a little closer to the day when girls all over the world will be able to look ahead with confidence that their lives will be valued, their individuality respected, their rights protected and their futures determined by their own abilities and character.

In such a world, the lives of all of us — men and women, boys and girls — will be enriched. It is to make progress towards such a world that the United States went to Beijing and participated — actively, forcefully and proudly — in shaping an agenda for action that will, when implemented, bring us all far closer to that goal.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Fourth World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum held in Beijing last September were a complete success. Over 46,000 representatives and friends from all over the world gathered in Beijing to discuss major issues of vital interest to women, and worked out programmes to expedite the realization of "equality, development and peace", in a warm, harmonious and pragmatic atmosphere.

The scale of the Conference and the number of participants in it were unprecedented in United Nations history. This demonstrates that the advancement of women has become an irreversible trend in today's world. It manifests the broad consensus of all countries on the advancement of women and the promotion of social development and international peace. It also shows a stronger political will than ever before on the part of the international community to further improve the situation of women and achieve gender equality at an early date, and indicates the unique role that the United Nations is playing in promoting the advancement of women throughout the world.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Conference are aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. They set forth the principles on, and the strategic objectives and actions to be taken for, the advancement of women. These two documents will undoubtedly guide the global cause of women in the next five years and into the next century. The Conference is of far-reaching importance to the advancement of women and to the promotion of peace,

development and human progress. It will surely go down as another important milestone in the annals of the development of women throughout the world.

As the host country, China made its own efforts to ensure the success of the Conference. Though we are not rich, we invested enormous amounts of financial, material and human resources and did whatever we could in support of all preparations for the Conference, thus making the contribution that we owe to the promotion of the cause of women throughout the world. While sharing in the joy of success of the Conference, we have not forgotten the understanding, cooperation and support we received from an overwhelming majority of countries — the G-77 in particular — relevant international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the press in the course of our preparations. We also received encouragement and assistance from many statesmen, women activists, experts, scholars and personalities from various quarters.

I wish to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, our gratitude to all of them. My special thanks go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali; Under-Secretary-General Kittani, the Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General; the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mrs. Mongella; and the entire staff of the secretariats of the United Nations and of the Conference for their unremitting efforts in preparing for the Conference and their important contributions to its success.

The success of the Conference has created a great momentum for promoting the advancement of women in the world. However, the achievement of genuine gender equality on a global scale remains an arduous task. The international community should take advantage of the current favourable opportunity by using the Conference as a starting point. It should adopt concrete measures to implement in good faith the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and translate determination into action and promises into reality, so as to achieve the objectives set forth in the Platform at an early date and promote the universal advancement of women.

The Chinese Government has all along attached importance to the advancement of women and pursued a policy of gender equality. It has always committed itself to protecting women's rights and interests and to bringing into full play their initiative, creativity and potential in the political, economic and social life of the country. We are ready to work together with the international community to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and carry out the follow-up activities of the Conference in a further display of the Conference's pragmatic spirit of unity and cooperation, so that the women of world will truly hold up half the sky.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): At the outset, I should like to express my appreciation to the Government and people of the People's Republic of China for having hosted in September this year the Fourth World Conference on Women, the first to be held in the Asia-Pacific region. Coming as I do from a country in that region, one that neighbours China, I am particularly pleased that the Beijing Conference was such a success.

The World Conference on Women provided the international community with an excellent opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to gender equality, a basic principle that was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations 50 years ago, when this Organization was created. The representatives who gathered in Beijing dedicated themselves to the advancement of women and to achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Indeed, the Conference lent greater momentum to efforts to empower women and produced strategies for the attainment of that objective. The nations gathered there committed themselves to taking action. It is now time to do so.

As part of its efforts to follow up the Beijing Conference, Japan undertook an initiative, at the current session of the Third Committee of the General Assembly, to strengthen support for activities to eradicate violence against women at the national and community levels, particularly in developing countries, by improving the means of mobilizing financial resources. The Committee has adopted a draft resolution on that subject, and we expect it to be adopted shortly in the plenary Assembly. Needless to say, this is but one of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. It is obvious that we must strengthen our efforts in other areas in order to advance the status of women, if progress is to be made in the field as a whole.

Before closing, I wish to note the crucial role played by non-governmental organizations in promoting the advancement of women. Their participation has been massive. Indeed, the number of people from Japanese non-governmental organizations alone attending the NGO Forum exceeded 5,000. These organizations clearly constitute a driving force for Conference follow-up activities.

However, the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action and attaining the objectives of the Conference lies with Governments, which must mobilize all actors in civil society to work jointly towards these ends. The Government of Japan, for its part, recognizes this responsibility and reiterates its firm commitment to implementing the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): In addressing the question of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing last September, the delegation of Tunisia unreservedly endorses the statement of the Group of 77 and takes this opportunity to congratulate the United Nations Secretary-General, as well as his colleagues in charge of the bodies dealing with the question of women — and especially Mrs. Gertrude Mongella — on the multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach adopted in considering matters related to the status of women.

I should like to take this opportunity also to express my delegation's great appreciation for the efforts that the People's Republic of China put into the organization and smooth running of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The Fourth World Conference on Women is the last such event in a century that has witnessed unprecedented change in the status of women. In this respect, Tunisia welcomes the consensus reached by the delegations present in Beijing on the Declaration and Platform for Action, which are capable of consolidating a number of advances for the benefit of women. Indeed, not only does the Beijing Platform for Action not have any clauses which, by comparison with what was agreed at the Vienna and Cairo Conferences, are regressive, but it strengthens a body of international texts in which women figure as full-fledged individuals and legal subjects.

Tunisia also welcomes the commitments entered made at the Conference in these three fields: reform of national policies with regard to the advancement of women; the pursuit of objectives for the year 2000; and the channelling of international cooperation for development so that women can finally share in the benefits enjoyed by men.

My country participated, with enthusiasm and sustained interest, in the preparation of the Beijing Conference. It also hosted an African conference of experts and a Mediterranean forum before the Beijing Conference took place. Our expectations with regard to the outcome of Beijing are therefore legitimately high. The commitments made at the Conference are certainly ambitious, but they are not unattainable if we all demonstrate the will that is necessary for their full realization.

For my country, which takes a particular interest in women's participation in development, the implementation of the Beijing Platform is a priority in economic and social development plans and programmes for the years ahead. In this field, as in many others, international solidarity is fundamental, in so far as it can help to strengthen action taken by Governments to implement recommendations and international commitments with a view to securing a tangible improvement in the status of women.

In this connection, Tunisia hopes to see greater participation by United Nations organs and agencies, in their respective fields and in accordance with their mandates, in the implementation of the Beijing recommendations. International institutions and organs should take action in the framework of their activities and programmes for the period 1995 to 2000. We consider that the intervention of these organizations would be a useful complement to and a means of providing support for the commitments Governments made, and we call for international solidarity to mobilize the necessary funds to underwrite their efforts for the advancement of women. In this connection, we hope that the anticipated budgetary restrictions will not affect the social sectors of the Organization, particularly those related to women and children.

With respect to the role of the General Assembly in the follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Conference's recommendations, Tunisia reaffirms its particular support for the following: the establishment of national machinery for the advancement of women; the involvement of all elements of civil society in efforts to achieve the objectives of the Platform for Action; and a biennial review of the implementation of the Platform.

My country has always worked with faith and determination to improve the status of women, and we should like to emphasize that sustainable development is inconceivable without the effective participation of women in the process of social and economic construction and in the flourishing of society as a whole.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/50/L.46.

I should like to announce that since the introduction of this draft resolution the following countries have become sponsors: Angola, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mongolia and Viet Nam.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/50/L.46.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt this draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/50/L.46 was adopted (resolution 50/42).

The President: Before calling on the representative of Saudi Arabia, who wishes to speak in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Rassi (Saudi Arabia): The delegation of Saudi Arabia joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/50/L.46 because we believe in the central role of women in the development of every society. We also believe that the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are steps in the right direction with regard to improvement of the status of women in society.

However, I should like to point out that my country does not consider itself bound by any part of the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women that contradicts Islamic Shariah law.

The President: There are no other speakers in explanation of position.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 165.

Programme of work

The President: In order to assist delegations, a tentative programme of work of the General Assembly covering the week of 11 to 15 December has been distributed in the Hall. Additions and changes to the programme of work for next week which appeared in document A/INF/50/5/Add.3 are reflected in the tentative programme of work just distributed.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.